

# FEAST OF SAINT JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

Patron Saint of Teachers

15 May 2021 *This is our time, an “acceptable time” to be hopeful “ and to make decisions, not out of fear of our own fragility, but with evangelical boldness and courage.*

<sup>[1]</sup> Cf. *Rule*, 40.

Dear Brothers, Partners and Members of the Lasallian Family,

Throughout the pandemic, Brothers, Partners, students, support staffs, and indeed all members of the Lasallian Family are being challenged to live De La Salle’s admonition “to be sure the school runs well”. All of you continue to create and sustain safe and welcoming educational environments in your educational communities and centers. Today, as we recall the life and work of John Baptist De La Salle, I offer my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to each of you for your heroic service, creative leadership, and constant and joyful proclamation of the Gospel.

Each one of us and all of us together continue to reflect on the impact of the many crises arising from the pandemic on our lives, social responsibilities and mission to announce the Good News to the poor. A crisis always leads to a turning point and a need for significant decisions. A crisis is often similar to an unexpected encounter that in the beginning is a dimly perceived catalyst impelling towards either radical change or the acceleration of a change already underway. John Baptist de La Salle’s unexpected encounter with Adrien Nyel is a familiar example of a crisis-causing event that leads to radical change. The Institute’s developing response to the pandemic is an example of a crisis that is accelerating changes already underway; as we know, the Institute has been on the path of change and renewal for quite some time.

Saint John Baptist de La Salle invites us to see all of life’s encounters and events with the eyes of faith; that is, in the context of our relationship with God and open to the influence of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual writer Henri Nouwen suggests

that we seek God's presence in all that unfolds because God is always acting in our history:

What we are seeking is already here.... We begin to see history not as a collection of events interrupting what we 'must' get done. We see time in light of faith in the God of history. We see how events of this year are not just a series of incidents and accidents, happy or unhappy, but the molding hands of God, who wants us to grow and mature.<sup>[1]</sup>

As we prepare for the 46<sup>th</sup> General Chapter and the related international assemblies, a conscious perception of the molding hands of God in all the upsetting and unsettling events caused by the pandemic will open us to another opportunity for both a more profound relationship with our sisters and brothers and a continuing life-giving renewal of our mission of human and Christian education.

The themes of both the General Chapter - *Building New paths to Transform Lives* - and the Third International Assembly of the Lasallian Educational Mission (AIMEL III) - *Identity · Vitality · Transformation* - inspire us to see this moment "as a time of profound revitalization" for our Lasallian Family and mission. *Transformation* envisions new models of inclusive governance at every level of the Institute and a fuller commitment to Lasallian Association.

Brothers and sisters, we are called to live our respective Lasallian vocations in association for mission and to expand our presence to the margins of society. We are called to experience this as an "acceptable time" to be beacons of hope and creators of bold decisions. Our faith in God sustains us and in our weakness we once again welcome Jesus Christ into our lives <sup>[2]</sup> so that we can remove what is irrelevant and recommit to the joy of the Gospel, since by faith Brothers, Partners, students and Members of the Lasallian Family [3] "judge all the realities of life in the light of the Gospel".[4]

Happy Feast Day!

Fraternally,

Brother Robert Schieler, FSC

Brother Superior

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[1] Nouwen, Henri. *Turn My Mourning into Dancing*, Word Publishing, 2001, p. 55.

[2] Cf. 2 Cor 12,10.

[3] General Council, Draft Paper on Association for Mission, 2021.

[4] Cf. Rule, 6.

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